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REACHING THE GOAL OF READINESS FOR SCHOOL

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SREB

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FOREWORD

States should strive for national, and increasingly international, standards in education. There is wide agreement among state leaders about this. All Southern Regional Education Board states have implemented educational reforms and new standards. The long-term results of these changes will determine whether there is a better future, with improved standards of living, for the citizens of this region.

But what results are expected from the new educational standards and programs?

- Have state leaders shaped the educational reforms into a vision of what they expect to accomplish?

- Do educators and government officials have ways of knowing whether they are on track with the educational programs? Of knowing whether they are supporting them adequately?

States that set educational goals will need to know what actions or results—what indicators of progress—will signal to citizens, educators, and government leaders that they are moving toward or reaching those goals. This report is one in a series presenting information about the "indicators of progress" for each goal in SREB's report, *Goals for Education: Challenge 2000.* The first group also includes reports that deal with college readiness and state funding for schools and colleges. Reports looking at other goals and related indicators will appear in the future.

SREB has suggested 12 goals and specific "indicators of progress" for each. These are not the only important goals or indicators. As priorities differ, so will goals and indicators. Each of these three reports in the current series provides information on issues related to a specific goal and the set of indicators to track progress.

In this particular report, information is presented that pertains to the goal of having all children ready for the first grade. "School readiness," or providing programs so that all students will be ready to begin formal schooling, is of growing interest among educators and governmental leaders. Preparing children for school involves more than educational issues; health and social concerns for youngsters are a major part of school readiness.

This particular report focuses on one specific part of the effort—state-funded educational programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in the SREB states. Information about early childhood education issues and programs is presented. Among the conclusions from SREB's work is that too few states have developed or supported systems which provide adequate information about early childhood efforts. In some cases, even the basic information on how many children are being served is not available. State departments of education in the SREB states have provided and/or verified the factual information in this report. We appreciate their cooperation and assistance.

Winfred L. Godwin, President
Southern Regional Education Board

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All children will be ready for the first grade.

Goals for Education
CHALLENGE 2000

- Students with higher achievement in elementary and high school
- Fewer school dropouts
- High school graduates who are better qualified to enter the job market
- More students who attend and complete college

These are the measures of success and the kinds of long-term educational results that states are seeking when they invest in early childhood programs. All of these results are specific goals of SREB's *Goals for Education*.

Extraordinary steps will be required to achieve these results in many states in the region. In several SREB states at least one-third of the students are "disadvantaged," that is, they come from families where income is below the federally defined poverty level. Scores on college entrance tests and college attendance rates are comparatively low. Dropout rates are high.

Today, too many children are not ready to do first-grade work. These children fall perilously behind. They frequently have to repeat the first, second, or third grade. By the third grade, many of these youngsters are already in danger of becoming a school dropout; far too many do not graduate from high school; and few enter college. "School readiness" programs can help more children enter first grade with social, mental, and physical skills to begin academic work. Now, only about one-third of four-year-old children from families with incomes of less than $10,000 are enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. Contrast that with the two-thirds of four-year-olds from families earning $35,000 a year or more who have the advantage of preschool training.

Several recent national reports, including those of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors' Association, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the Bank Street College of Education, have reported on the increasing need for preschool programs. The Council of Chief State School Officers called for guaranteeing an opportunity for publicly-funded programs for "at risk" four-year-olds. The National Association of State Boards of Education recommended that early childhood units be established in elementary schools to work with children aged four to eight.

The development and expansion of preschool programs have been based on research that documents the short-term and the long-term effects of quality preschool education for children from low-income families. Studies of children who attended different preschool programs found fewer children were placed in special education classes; children did not repeat grades or drop out of school as often; and student achievement in early years was improved.

While longer-term studies are not as numerous, results are similar. A comprehensive study of 19-year-olds showed lower arrest rates and fewer teenage pregnancies, and higher postsecondary enrollments and better employment for those who had attended a particular preschool program. Another study of young adults who had participated in a comprehensive preschool program in the 1960s found higher rates for high school graduation and employment. The young adults were one-third more likely to have had postsecondary education.

A recent follow-up of children who participated in a home-based parent and child program in West Virginia in the early Seventies indicates that fewer children were retained in the first grade and more graduated from high school than would have been expected. Researchers stress that these are demonstrated effects of *quality* programs—ones with low child/staff ratios, an appropriate curriculum, and teachers with appropriate education and training. Merely offering a program is no guarantee of later differences for children.

Access to public kindergarten is now universal across the SREB states. Fifteen years ago, just five SREB states (Florida, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia) provided public kindergarten for all who wanted to attend; no SREB state required it. Florida was the first state in the nation to require kindergarten attendance (1982). Now, kindergarten attendance is mandatory before entrance to first grade in six SREB states.

During the 1980s, and especially over the last five years, public schools have assumed a greater role in programs for pre-kindergarten children.

SREB states use a variety of delivery systems for pre-kindergarten programs. In some states, the focus is on programs through public schools; others are developing home-based programs. In some cases, efforts are directed to improving parents' educational levels as well as helping children.

Twenty-three states nationally and nine SREB states have established state-funded educational programs for some 3- and 4-year-old children. These programs are generally targeted for "at risk" students, and in Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas are offered through public schools. (Kentucky's Parent and Child Education Program [PACE] is a joint program for pre-kindergarten children and parents.) West Virginia and Alabama fund programs for a limited number of children. Virginia has approved a plan to establish state-funded programs and has established a state agency to coordinate efforts.

Proposals have been made in Arkansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee to establish or enlarge state-funded efforts. Other state-sponsored programs use federal funding. The Arkansas Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is designed for instruction of young children in the home by parents. West Virginia and Mississippi have started similar efforts.

A regional project, funded by the Kenan Foundation and patterned after the Kentucky PACE program, which was demonstrated during 1988-89 at several sites in Kentucky and North Carolina, involves joint efforts by school districts and community colleges.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "READY" FOR THE FIRST GRADE?

The first grade has historically been the beginning of schooling. This has changed dramatically. Most children begin formal education in kindergarten and increasingly at the age of 4. Early education is now thought of as spanning ages 4 through 8. It may now be more difficult for states to define readiness for the first grade. Definitions may vary from state to state. In some states academic work may begin in kindergarten. Appropriate curricula for 3-, 4-, 5-, or 6-year-olds will need to be outlined. Only then can assessments be developed to determine what it means for a child to be "ready" for the first grade.

Early childhood education is on the agenda of educators and government officials around the nation. Some current and proposed policies directed to determining children's readiness for school are controversial. Much of the controversy has centered on the use of written tests for kindergarten children. The debate is whether to use a test to determine if a child is to remain in kindergarten, or go to first grade or to a "transitional" first grade.

Most early childhood educators recommend a more individualized approach using several sources of information that may include, as one part, a set of test or assessment results. Mississippi and Georgia have recently moved to a more individualized approach using multiple assessments to determine readiness for first grade as opposed to using one written test. North Carolina and Texas no longer test first-grade students as part of their statewide testing program.

Providing the right program for an individual child depends on assessing each child's needs, developing appropriate programs for the child, and determining whether the child is ready to be-

gin academic work in the first grade. The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Task Force on Early Childhood Education reports that "the most important consideration in evaluating and using standardized tests is the utility criterion—that is, the purpose of testing must be to improve services for children. . . ."

Readiness assessments at first grade can provide information about effectiveness of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs or how many students are prepared. The NASBE report suggests that while schools and programs need to be held accountable, procedures and programs should not "stigmatize" children. A child who is labeled a "failure" in school at age six, and who knows it, could well be a school dropout by age sixteen, or sooner.

HOW CAN STATES MEASURE THEIR PROGRESS TOWARD GETTING ALL STUDENTS "READY" FOR THE FIRST GRADE?

States should track indicators of progress in providing programs that help all children be ready with social, mental, and physical skills to begin academic work in the first grade. Three major areas for measuring progress are:

- Availability of Programs
- Quality of Programs
- Results for Children

"Progress" means "results." Results for children who have attended school readiness programs, however, are not easy to measure. Long-term results cannot be measured on a short-term basis. States should assess results by using a number of measures, but they should also insist that making quality programs *available* is likely to produce positive results.

What works in programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children? There is general agreement about the importance of an appropriate curriculum, well-trained staff, relatively small class size, low ratios of students to teachers, active family participation, and coordination of health and community services.

More information is needed about the *availability* of programs for children, especially for those "at risk," the *quality* of the programs, and most importantly, whether the programs are making a difference—the *results*.

Persons who make decisions about programs for young children need to know what the research shows about programs that have positive effects for children. For instance,

Do current programs have:

low child-to-staff ratios (10:1 is generally recommended)?

trained staff?

a curriculum that is developed for the young child?

low staff turnover?

These are all characteristics of effective programs that have shown longer-term benefits for children.

While states are developing a variety of approaches to offer programs, the information presented here focuses primarily on one area—publicly-funded state educational programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children, and inciudes benchmarks and data that each state may need in tracking progress. For some measures, new data sources are needed. (For example, most states cannot report how many first-graders have attended preschool programs.)

For a complete understanding of a state's efforts, information will be needed on private and publicly-supported programs, federal and local efforts, programs for handicapped children, child care, and community service programs. While programs such as Head Start or school kindergartens serve children with handicaps, the information and data included here do not include specific special education programs.

AVAILABILITY

Indicators of progress are:

"Increasing the percentage of 'at risk' children served by pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs to 100 percent by the year 2000."

"Establishing programs that help those children who are unprepared to begin academic work in the first grade in 100 percent of the districts."

As states examine the availability of programs, particularly for children who will benefit most from them, several questions must be answered.

Do states have a clear understanding of their "at risk" population of preschool children?

Has the term "at risk" been defined by states and districts?

What is the state policy on the role of public schools in providing programs for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds?

What percentage of districts are offering programs?

What percentage of children are being served?

Table 1
PERCENT SCHOOL AGE POPULATION IN POVERTY SREB STATES, 1980

	Percent School Age Population in Poverty
	1980
Alabama	23%
Arkansas	23
Florida	18
Georgia	21
Kentucky	22
Louisiana	23
Maryland	12
Mississippi	30
North Carolina	18
Oklahoma	15
South Carolina	21
Tennessee	20
Texas	18
Virginia	14
West Virginia	18

Note: Poverty level income was $7,412 for a family of four.
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "United States Summary: General Social and Economic Characteristics: 1980," (PC80-1-C1), Table 245, 1983.

Defining "At Risk"

Definitions and percentages of "at risk" students vary among the SREB states. Two distinctions need to be made.

First, eligibility of districts to receive funding for programs is often based on the proportion of "at risk" students as determined by family income or education. For example, the percent of students receiving free lunches, or districts with 60 percent of adults with no high school education are criteria often used for determining the districts that have the greatest need for programs. Performance at first grade or later may be used; this is the case in South Carolina.

The second distinction is the definition used by districts for individual placement of children in pre-kindergarten programs. For federally-funded programs, such as Head Start, family income is used. State programs may use family income or additional criteria. In Texas, not being able to speak English is a criterion. In Florida, being a child of migrant workers qualifies children for one program. Other states may use some type of individual screening that assesses social, physical, and mental development of a child to determine if a student is "at risk" (Tables 1 and 2).

Currently, most SREB states do not know how many or what percentage of "at risk" first-graders (as defined by each state) have attended kindergarten or pre-kindergarten programs. Several SREB states do not have a working definition of "at risk" children as a group in elementary grades.

Table 2
STATE DEFINITIONS OF "AT RISK" CHILDREN, CHILD AND DISTRICT ELIGIBILITY, STATE-FUNDED PROGRAMS SREB STATES, 1989

	Definition of "At Risk" Children, K-6	Definition of "At Risk" Children in Pre-kindergarten Programs	Criteria for District Eligibility for Pre-kindergarten Programs
Alabama	Any student who for academic or behavioral reasons is in danger of becoming a school dropout.	No Program	
Arkansas	Children whose educational progress may be jeopardized by health, social, educational, familial, and economic factors.	No Program	
Florida	Not defined	Early Intervention Program–economic or educational disadvantage as determined by local school board. Migrant Program–migrant used as indicator of disadvantage.	All districts with economically or educationally disadvantaged 3-, 4-year-olds. Migrant children in district.
Georgia	(Established in 1989) Grades K-1: Developmental problems; below 35th percentile on norm-referenced test; Grades 2–5: Below 25th percentile.	No Program	
Kentucky	Not defined	Parent and Child Education Program (PACE)–child is "at risk" if parent does not have a high school education.	60% adults have no high school diploma.
Louisiana	Not defined	Children from families with incomes below $15,000, 1 year under entrance age for kindergarten; screening; parental commitment.	Districts apply for awards. Number of projects funded in a district is based on student population.
Maryland	Students who perform at less than average achievement–below 49th percentile; students who attend schools with high concentration of poverty.	Children living in attendance area of qualifying school.	Chapter I eligible schools in each school system can be selected for program participation.
Mississippi	(Under development)	No Program	
North Carolina	Children who are educationally or economically deprived.	Under development for pilot projects.	Under development for pilot projects. (Awaiting funding by General Assembly)
Oklahoma	Not defined	Children selected on "first come" basis in identified schools.	Economic conditions and geographic distribution of districts.
South Carolina	Not defined	Defined readiness deficiencies and other factors; health appraisal.	Districts receive funding based on student population.
Tennessee	Not defined	No Program	
Texas	Students who fail to meet the requirements for promotion from one grade to the next.	Eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch or limited English proficiency.	Must offer programs if at least 15 children are eligible.
Virginia	Not defined	Local programs: Meet Chapter I guidelines; economically or educationally disadvantaged as determined by school board.	Any districts choosing to provide services with Chapter I or local funds.
West Virginia	Not defined	Determined by district definition.	All districts are eligible.

SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Marx, F. and Seligson, M., *Public School Early Childhood Study—State Survey*, Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

Some states do. For instance, in Texas, students who fail to meet promotion requirements from one grade to the next are "at risk"; in Maryland, students who have less than average achievement or who attend schools with high concentrations of poverty are considered "at risk"; in Georgia, those who in kindergarten or first grade score below the 35th percentile on achievement tests are "at risk."

Kindergarten

All SREB states fund publicly-supported kindergarten programs (Table 3). In five SREB states full-day kindergarten *must* be offered. Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina require that students attend either public or private kindergarten. Provisions are made for waivers, but they are not used extensively. In states that do not require attendance, it is important to know how many first-graders have attended kindergarten and whether those not attending are from "disadvantaged homes."

National census data show that 96 percent of 5- and 6-year-old children are enrolled in school. In the SREB states, 70 to 95 percent of children in the first grade have attended publicly-funded kindergarten programs. Eight SREB states do not define an "at risk" group, and, therefore, cannot provide information about whether these children have attended kindergarten. In fact, some states do not have information about how many of all first-grade students have attended kindergarten programs (Table 4).

Benchmarks on Availability of Kindergarten Education

- State policies on kindergarten
- Percentage of districts that offer full day/half day programs
- Percentage of first-grade students who have attended kindergarten identified by public or private school attendance and whether considered "at risk"

Table 3
STATE POLICIES ON KINDERGARTEN SREB STATES, 1989

	Kindergarten Program That Must be Offered	Percent of Districts That Offer		Minimum Hours/Day for Kindergarten Program	
		Half Day	Full Day	Half Day	Full Day
Alabama	Full Day	...	100%	...	NP*
Arkansas	Half or Full Day	Not Available		3.5	5.5
Florida	Half or Full Day	... (2 districts offer both)	100%	3.0	4.0
Georgia	Full Day	...	100%	...	4.5
Kentucky	Half or Full Day	53%	47% (or combination)	3.0	6.0
Louisiana	Half Day	3%	97%	165 minutes	5.5
Maryland	Half Day	80%	20%	2.5	6.0
Mississippi	Full Day	...	100%	...	5.5
North Carolina	Full Day	...	100%	...	NP*
Oklahoma	Half Day	Not Available		2.5	2.5
South Carolina	Half Day	73%	27%	2.5	NP*
Tennessee	Half Day	100%	0	4.0	NP*
Texas	Half or Full Day	28%	72%	3.0	7.0
Virginia	Half or Full Day	19%	81%	3.0	3.0
West Virginia	Half or Full Day	Not Available		2.6	5.25

"..." = Not Applicable
*NP = No Policy
SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Council of Chief State School Officers. *State Education Indicators*, 1988.

Table 4
PERCENT OF ALL FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN SREB STATES, 1987-1988

	First-grade Membership Fall, 1987*	Estimated Percent of First-Grade Students "At Risk"	Percent of All First-Grade Students Who Attended Pre-K Programs	Percent of All First-Grade Students Who Attended Kindergarten	
				Public	Private
Alabama	62,293	—	—	87%	—
Arkansas	37,225	—	—	—	—
Florida	143,854	—	—	—	—
Georgia	97,353	20%	—	—	—
Kentucky	54,536	"at risk" not identified	—	88%	12%
Louisiana	71,191	"at risk" not identified	—	98%	
Maryland	58,466	8-12%	17%	91%	—
Mississippi	46,471	"at risk" not identified	less than 1% attend public programs	72%	—
North Carolina	85,622	7%	—	98% (estimated)	—
Oklahoma	54,941	—	—	—	—
South Carolina	55,612	"at risk" not identified	—	87%	9%
Tennessee	71,358	—	—	—	—
Texas	291,838	"at risk" not identified	17%	93%	
Virginia	79,758	—	—	—	—
West Virginia	26,420	"at risk" not identified	—	—	—

"—" = Information not available (this and other tables).
* National Center for Education Statistics. Common Core of Data diskette, school year 1987-1988. U.S. Department of Education, December 1988.
SOURCE: State departments of education, April 1989.

Pre-kindergarten

Since 1980, nine SREB states have funded education programs for pre- kindergarten children. Most of the programs focus on "at risk" 4-year-olds, but programs in Kentucky and Florida include 3-year-old children. The program in Texas is estimated to reach about half of the eligible children. In nearly every case, funding is the factor that determines how many children have the opportunity to attend preschool programs.

Additional educational programs in the SREB states include locally- and federally-funded programs for pre-kindergarten 3- and 4-year-olds. Head Start, the largest program for 3- and 4-year-olds, is a federally-funded effort. Head Start enrolls the largest number of pre-kindergarten children, but it reaches only about 15 to 20 percent of "at risk" children. Federal funding under Chapter 1 for "disadvantaged" students in elementary and secondary grades can be used for school-based programs for pre-kindergarten children. Ten SREB states use Chapter 1 funds in this way. Even Start is a new program under Chapter 1 that will combine adult and early childhood education.

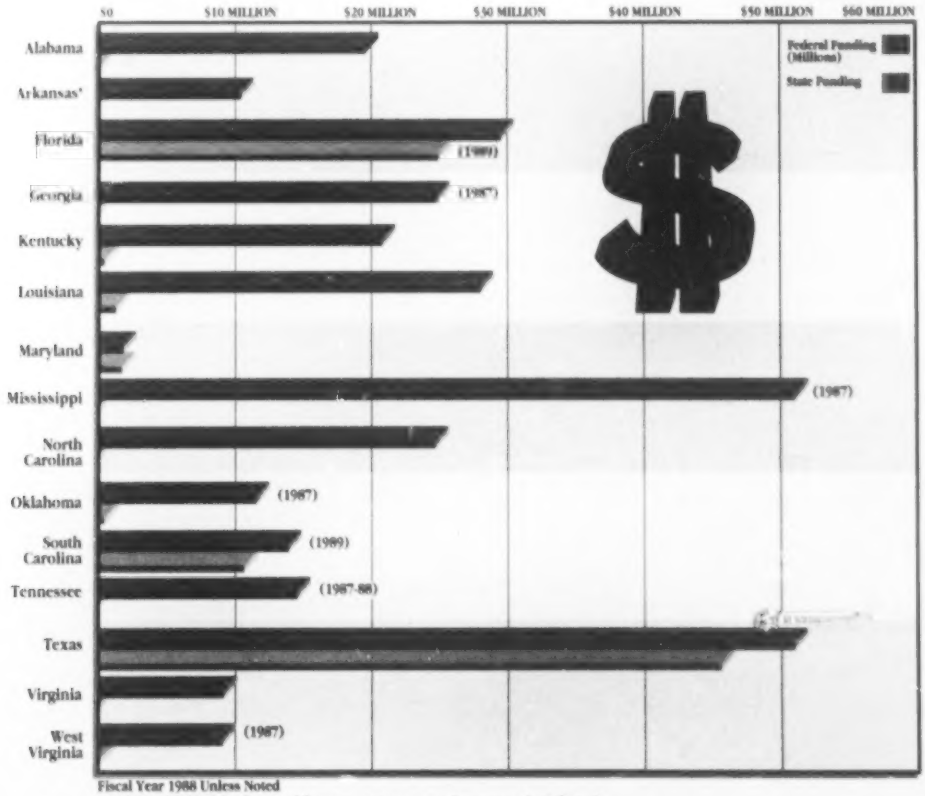
Some SREB states are using other federal funding to channel money into pre-kindergarten programs. This is money not traditionally thought

of as earmarked for preschool education. In Arkansas, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funding is used to provide services for 3- and 4-year-old children and their parents in the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). As states direct limited resources, it will become increasingly important to examine flexible funding alternatives for preschool education.

Tracking the state's commitment to ensure that pre-kindergarten children receive needed services will mean that state-, federally-, and locally-funded education programs, child care services, and health services should be followed to determine if programs are reaching "at risk" children. Information compiled here focuses on state-funded education programs, especially those that are part of the public school program (Table 5, Figures 1 and 2).

Benchmarks on Availability of Pre-kindergarten Education

- State policies on pre-kindergarten education programs
- Numbers of students in programs and funding sources (federal, state, local)
- Percentage of "at risk" children served by programs
- Percentage of all first grade and "at risk" students who have had one or two years of pre-kindergarten education



Fiscal Year 1988 Unless Noted

* Additional federal funding used for some state-sponsored programs (not shown).

Figure 1
FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

SOURCES: Council of Chief State School Officers, *State Profiles, Early Childhood and Parent Education and Related Services, 1988*
State departments of education, April 1989.

Table 5
STATE-FUNDED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN
SREB STATES, 1989

	Program*	Program Description	Funding Method
Alabama	Community Education Programs (1987)	Developmental activities for 4-year-olds with parental training as a part of the program (limited-five districts).	State appropriations–districts apply for funding.
Arkansas	Priority for State Board of Education in 1989-1990. Governor has proposed model for identifying "at risk" 4-year-olds.	No Program	
Florida	Pre-K Early Intervention Program (1986)	Developmentally appropriate program for 3- and 4-year-olds to provide intervention and increase education readiness for children.	Grants to districts based on state formula (may be subcontracted). Some programs in conjunction with Headstart, Title XX, or Chapter 1 programs.
	Early Childhood Migrant Program (1981)	Full day instructional program for 3- and 4-year-olds 5 days a week during school year. Program to develop social, physical, and mental skills; parental involvement.	Formula basis to districts (may be subcontracted).
Georgia	No Program		
Kentucky	Parent and Child Education Program [PACE] (1986)	All day 3 days/week developmental program for 3-, 4-year-olds with parents gaining basic academic and parenting skills.	Districts apply for grants (may be subcontracted).
Louisiana	Early Childhood Development Projects (1984)	Developmental program for "at risk" 4-year-old children–90% are full day.	Awards to district–based on enrollment (may not be subcontracted).
Maryland	Extended Elementary Education Program (1979)	Half day developmental program for 4-year-olds. Cooperative funding (i.e. local and federal Chapter 1 funds) is used to extend the state-funded programs.	Line item in state budget. Districts apply for funds. State funding for salaries only.
Mississippi	No Program		
North Carolina	Pre-kindergarten Pilot Program (Proposed)	16 pilot centers for 3- and 4-year-olds under direction of State Board of Education. Programs would be full day, full year (proposed)	Grants to 16 districts (proposed).
Oklahoma	Early Childhood Development Centers (1980)	Half day/full day program for 4-year-olds 4 days/week to provide early identification of needs. Fifth day is used for parent program. 25 of 37 programs are half day.	Competitive grants to schools–maximum $27,000.
South Carolina	Half day program for 4-year-olds (1984)	Pre-kindergarten programs offered in 89 of the 91 districts; 72 offer half day for 4-year-olds. All programs have parent participation.	Formula funded for salaries–districts provide building and overhead; some districts extend programs (may subcontract; none do so now).
Tennessee	No Program		
Texas	Pre-kindergarten Program (1984)	Half day program for disadvantaged 4-year-olds.	Funded per child with district contribution in accordance with state law. Some programs in conjunction with Head Start.
Virginia	Pilot Program Only		
West Virginia	Child Development Programs (1987)	Programs in 10 counties that include full day program; home-based parent program; and half day home, half day center-based programs.	Grants to districts.

* Does not include programs designed especially for handicapped children.

SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Marx, F. and Seligson, M., *Public School Early Childhood Study—State Survey*, Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

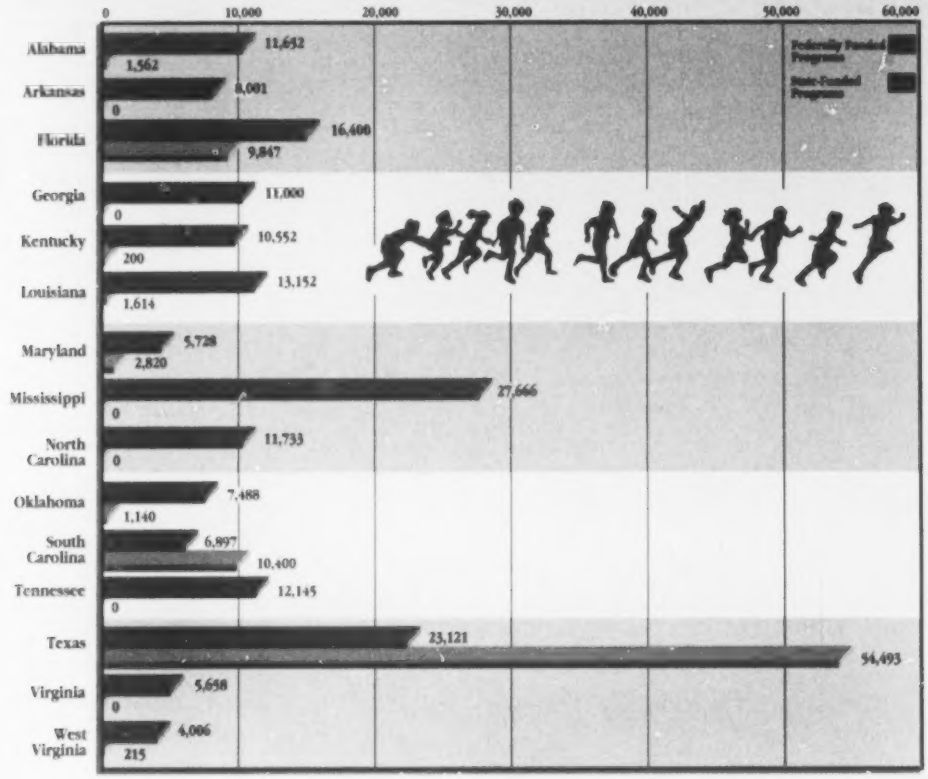


Figure 2
CHILDREN SERVED IN PUBLICLY-FUNDED PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS IN SREB STATES

*Fiscal Year 1988 unless noted.
SOURCES: Council of Chief State School Officers, *State Profiles, Early Childhood and Parent Education and Related Services, 1988*. State departments of education, April 1989.

QUALITY

An indicator of progress is:

"Using readiness assessments for all children prior to their beginning the first grade and providing appropriate developmental programs to meet individual needs."

As states and districts examine progress in serving the needs of pre- school children, the quality of educational programs will need to be examined.

Is the funding adequate to provide a successful program?

Are properly trained staff available?

What are required teacher-to-student ratios?

Is staff turnover a problem?

What are the state standards for curriculum in programs?

How is assessment being used in kindergarten or pre-kindergarten programs?

Kindergarten

Funds for operating kindergarten programs have become a part of the regular funding formula for schools in the SREB states. Federal and local funds contribute to total funding in some states.

Table 6
PROGRAM STANDARDS FOR STATE-FUNDED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS SREB STATES, 1989

	Required Student/ Teacher Ratio	Curriculum	Year Revised	Student Assessments
Alabama	17:1	Based on developmental philosophy with emphasis on emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development	1987	Determined by local district
Arkansas	20:1	Developmental and readiness program based on state-adopted course content guides	—	No state mandate; district option
Florida	Established by district	Developmental curriculum	—	Primary Education Program
Georgia	20:1	Based on state-mandated quality core curriculum objectives and state handbook for kindergarten	1988	(1988-89) California Achievement Test (1989-1990) Criterion-referenced test to be administered individually
Kentucky	25:1 Maximum of 28	State guidelines	1985	Appropriate norm-referenced tests may be used.
Louisiana	20:1 Maximum of 26	Developmental, with emphasis on emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development	1986	Kindergarten developmental readiness screening program upon entrance.
Maryland	22-25:1	Based on age and stage of development	—	Early Identification and Intervention Program
Mississippi	24:1 or 27:1 with teacher assistant	State guidelines	—	Stanford Achievement Test (until 1989-90)
North Carolina	23:1	Basic Education Program outlines curriculum	introduced 1986	Screening; selection by district; must be developmentally appropriate
Oklahoma	23:1 (proposed)	Basic learning and communications skills	1987	Mandated screening; instruments selected at the local level
South Carolina	30:1 Maximum of 30	Based on stated philosophy; developmentally appropriate	1982	Not statewide
Tennessee	25:1	State guidelines	—	Pre-first grade screening (state mandate)
Texas	22:1	State guidelines	1984	None at state level
Virginia	25:1	Appropriate to readiness and maturity levels	1986	Standards of Learning Assessment/ Readiness Assessment (K or 1)
West Virginia	20:1 If class is larger than 10, an aide is required	Concentrates on developing intellectual, physical/motor, and social/emotional skills	1983	Evaluation program to measure readiness to begin formal school is required (to be developed by regional centers; effective 1990-1991)

SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Marx, F. and Seligson, M., *Public School Early Childhood Study—State Survey*, Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

However, SREB states, for the most part, do not compile information about local funding of kindergarten programs.

Across the SREB states, program standards for kindergarten show more similarities than differences. State standards and objectives influence the curriculum in most states; whether these reflect the latest thinking in early childhood education should be examined. Required teacher-to-child ratios are an important consideration.

Another quality issue is the use of assessments or tests of readiness for young children, as noted

earlier. Assessments need to examine physical, social, and mental readiness of children to begin academic work. The *purpose* of the assessment must be absolutely clear, that is, to ensure that each child gets the appropriate help (Table 6).

Quality and training of staff are important in tracking progress. All SREB states require certification of teachers in public kindergarten programs. Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Tennessee require that teachers in private kindergarten must be certified if the program is to receive state accreditation.

In most states certification allows a teacher to teach in kindergarten and early elementary grades. A lingering question is whether holding a certificate translates into properly educated teachers and staff. While many states require that a certification test be taken in early childhood education, it is not clear whether teacher education programs and classroom experiences that are a part of the program for kindergarten through grade 4 or kindergarten through grade 6 teachers include the kind of preparation needed for teaching 3-, 4-, or 5-year-old children (Table 7).

In the SREB states, over 300 colleges and universities have been approved to offer early childhood programs. In 1985, 88 percent of some 1,700 graduates were from public institutions. This figure underestimates the supply, since graduates may complete programs in elementary education, special education, or home economics and be certified to teach young children. Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia report few or no persons teaching out-of-field in kindergarten programs. Other states do not report such data. As programs expand, states will need teachers and paraprofessionals who have appropriate education and training.

Benchmarks for Quality of Kindergarten Education

- State, local, and federal funding in relation to numbers of children in programs
- Required teacher-to-student ratio
- State policy on appropriate curriculum
- Use of assessments for individual student needs
- Teachers with appropriate education for teaching kindergarten

Pre-kindergarten

Accepted standards for pre-kindergarten programs are generally the same as those presented earlier on kindergarten programs. These include: appropriate curriculum, low child/staff ratios, class sizes that do not exceed 20 children, and staff training. While important in all early childhood programs, parent participation takes on additional importance in programs for 3- and 4-year-olds (Table 8).

As states expand programs, the need for qualified teachers will increase. Seven SREB states require certification for pre-kindergarten teachers (Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia).

A 1988 study by the Bank Street College of Education showed that a bachelor's degree is required for most state- and locally-funded pre-kindergarten programs, but that only about 40 percent of the Head Start programs require a degree. Almost 60 percent of the teachers in state-funded programs had Early Childhood Education certification and one year of experience teaching children under 5 years of age; about 40 percent of Head Start teachers had the same qualifications. SREB states report 80 to 100 percent of teachers in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs are certified.

Turnover rates, especially among paraprofessionals working with children, are of special concern. Turnover often can be linked to salaries paid to teachers and staff. Only about half of the SREB states that have pre-kindergarten programs are able to report turnover rates for teachers and paraprofessionals.

Benchmarks for Quality of Pre-kindergarten Education

- Funding in relation to number of children served and in relation to number of children "at risk"
- Required teacher-to-child ratio
- State policy on appropriate curriculum, with assessment of needs of children

Table 7
PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS SREB STATES, 1989

	Certificate Required to Teach Kindergarten	Specialty Area Test	Certification Required for Private School Teachers	Certificate Required to Teach Pre-kindergarten	Requirements for Pre-kindergarten Certification
Alabama	K-3 Early Childhood	None	Yes. Any type of certificate.	No	N/A
Arkansas	K-6 Elementary Education	NTE-Early Childhood	Yes. Only in accredited schools.	No	N/A
Florida	K-3 Primary Education 6 semester hours in N-K Methods and Observation	State-developed Primary Education	No	No	Under development
Georgia	K-4 Early Childhood	State-developed Early Childhood or Middle School	No	No	N/A
Kentucky	K-4		Yes. Only in accredited schools.	No	N/A
Louisiana	N-K	NTE-Early Childhood	No. Must have bachelor degree with 12 hours child development or certification in appropriate area.	Yes	NTE-Early Childhood Test
Maryland	N-3	NTE-Early Childhood	No	Yes	NTE-Early Childhood Test
Mississippi	K-8 Elementary Education	NTE-Education in Elementary School	No	N-K certificate was issued until 1986	NA
North Carolina	K-6	NTE-Elementary Education	No	Pre-K-K add-on endorsement	Former K-4 Early Childhood certificate plus Pre-K endorsement
Oklahoma	K-8 Elementary Education	State-developed Elementary Education	Yes. Only in accredited schools.	Yes	Early Childhood Test
South Carolina	K-4 Early Childhood	NTE-Early Childhood	No	Yes. In public school programs	Same as kindergarten
Tennessee	1-8 Elementary Education and Kindergarten Endorsement	NTE-Early Childhood	Yes. In state approved schools.	No	N/A
Texas	Teacher of Young Children-General PK-K (Early Childhood) PK-6/Early Childhood Kindergarten Endorsement	State-developed Kindergarten Test; Early Childhood Test	No	Yes	Elementary-general or vocational home economics with kindergarten endorsement
Virginia	NK-4 Endorsement	NTE-Early Childhood Elementary Education	No	Yes. In public school programs	NK-4 Endorsement; NTE
West Virginia	Professional Certification and Endorsement (PK-K) or Multi-Subject K-4	State-developed Specialty test	No	Yes	PK-K Early Childhood Test

N = Nursery; K = Kindergarten; NTE = National Teacher Examinations; N/A = Not applicable
SOURCE: State departments of education, April 1989.

Table 8
STANDARDS FOR STATE PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS SREB STATES, 1989

	Program	Required Child/ Teacher Ratio	Curriculum	Use of Assessment
Alabama	Standards are under Development			
Arkansas	No Program			
Florida	Early Childhood, Pre-K Intervention	8:1 recommended	Individualized instruction to develop physical skills, language development, and social skills	Assessment determined by district, longitudinal assessment is required. Assessment of need is required–determined by district
	Early Childhood Migrant	10:1 class limit of 17-20		
Georgia	No Program			
Kentucky	Parent and Child Education (PACE)	7.5:1 Limit 15	High/Scope Developmental Program	Developmental assessments
Louisiana	Early Childhood Development	20:1 with full-time aide 13-15:1 with half-time aide 12:1 with no aide	Full-day programs are recommended–about 75% of the districts use commercially developed programs, others are locally developed. All have parental involvement (Reviewed by SDOE)	All must use a screening instrument for readiness and social maturity (districts may select one of five); Pre/Post measures may be used by districts for program evaluation
Maryland	Extended Elementary Education Program	Teacher plus Teacher Assistant. 10:1 with maximum class size of 20 students	Language and concept development–small group instruction and child-initiated activity; home cooperation is stressed; children are followed through age 9	Ongoing assessment of child's growth and development–across staff in the early learning years
Mississippi	No Program			
North Carolina	Pre-kindergarten Pilot Program (proposed)	16:2	Under development	Under development
Oklahoma	Early Childhood Development Centers	Maximum class size of 20	Developmental curriculum with learning environment arranged in centers; must provide continuity to kindergarten program	Informal and formal assessments
South Carolina	Half-day 4-year-old Program	10:1 1 Teacher and 1 aide per 20 students	Developmental curriculum using NAEYC guidelines is recommended; High/Scope model is encouraged	Screening for developmental level
Tennessee	No Program			
Texas	Pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds	22:1 maximum class size of 22	State guidelines for curriculum in the areas of communication, cognition, fine arts, etc.	Determined by districts.
Virginia	Pre-kindergarten pilot program for 4-year-olds	10:1 maximum class size of 20	High/Scope cognitively-oriented curriculum	Developmental Screening test; optional pre/post measure of progress
West Virginia	Child Development Programs–Center-based; Home-based; Home- and center-based	15:1	Child development programs serving children with developmental problems	State department has developed a child assessment system for use in 6 areas; curriculum guides have been developed to address needs of children

SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Marx, F. & Seligson, M., *Public School Early Childhood Study–State Survey*, Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

- Teachers with appropriate education and experience with children under five years of age; paraprofessionals with proper training
- Turnover rates for teachers and staff
- Additional measures may include availability of child care with education programs, parent participation, and salary of teachers and staff

RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Fewer high school dropouts, more students attending college, and students with higher achievement in elementary and high school will be long-term indicators that progress is occurring in reaching educational goals in the coming years. Studies tracking differences into early high school years for children who have attended quality pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs show positive effects. This approach for determining their effectiveness will need to be used in long-term evaluation of programs.

Limited information is currently available on the impact of pre-kindergarten programs in the SREB states, especially long-term studies. Through demonstration of readiness for the first grade and achievement and retention in early grades, South Carolina is tracking progress of children who have attended pre-kindergarten programs. States should undertake both long- and short-term evaluations of programs.

As states and districts begin to track progress toward having all children ready for the first grade, outcome measures in the early grades will be short-term indicators. Those may include: retention in early grades, special education placements, achievement, results of readiness assessments of physical, social, and mental skills, especially examining changes in what percentage of children are deemed "ready" in different skill areas. States should use a wide variety of measures in tracking progress. Using outcome measures for program evaluation will enable states to pinpoint problems of needed services for children (Table 9).

Because of the broad nature of services needed—educational, health, and social services, such as child care—effective coordination at the state level and in local communities is necessary. In South Carolina, state coordination is handled through an agency in the governor's office. In Virginia, a state agency to coordinate services for education and child care was created and funded by the 1989 General Assembly (Table 10).

Benchmarks for Results and Coordination

- Percentage of students meeting readiness assessments to begin first-grade academic work
- Percentage of children retained in first grade
- Achievement of children in early grades, with special attention to those who have attended pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs
- State policy on coordination of services

Selected Resources

Council of Chief State School Officers. *State Profiles: Early Childhood and Parent Education and Related Services.* Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988.

Marx, F. and Seligson, M. *The Public School Early Childhood Study—State Survey.* New York: Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

Mitchell, A. *The Public School Early Childhood Study—District Survey.* New York: Bank Street College of Education, 1988.

National Association of State Boards of Education. *Right from the Start: The Report of the NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988.

Table 9
SELECTED STUDENT OUTCOME MEASURES FOR EARLY GRADES SREB STATES, 1989

	Percent of Students Meeting Readiness Assessments for First Grade 1987-88	Percent of Children Retained in First Grade 1987-88	Achievement Tests in Early Grades			
			Grades			
			K	1	2	3
Alabama	Not Applicable	—		NRT	NRT	CRT
Arkansas	Not Applicable	—				CRT
Florida	Not Applicable	9.6%				NAEP/CRT (1987, 1988 only)
Georgia	91.4%	12.6%	NRT	CRT	NRT	NAEP/CRT
Kentucky	Not Applicable	5.1%	NRT	NRT	NRT	NRT
Louisiana	Not Applicable	14%				CRT
Maryland	Assessments determined by local district; not required.	7.8%				NRT
Mississippi	Not Applicable	13.6%				CRT
North Carolina	Not Applicable	7.7%				NRT/CRT
Oklahoma	Not Applicable	—				NRT
South Carolina	75.2%	—		CRT	CRT	CRT
Tennessee	Not Applicable	—			NRT	CRT
Texas	Not Applicable	Approximately 10%		CRT (to be phased out)		CRT
Virginia	Not Applicable	8.7%	CRT	NRT* CRT	CRT	CRT
West Virginia	Not Applicable	—		CRT	CRT	CRT

CRT- = Criterion Referenced Test
NRT- = Norm Referenced Test
NAEP = National Assessment of Educational Progress
* Ability, not achievement test
SOURCE: State departments of education, 1989.

Table 10
STATE COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN SREB STATES, 1989

	Agency	Authority	Function
Alabama	Governor's Task Force on Child Care State Advisory Committee on Kindergarten	Ad hoc committee (1986) Advisory	Address issues across programs
Arkansas	Governor's Task Force on Child Care	Ad hoc committee (1987)	Long-range planning and coordination
Florida	State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education (District Coordinating Councils are required)	Legislation (1986)–assist and advise Commissioner of Education with implementation of Pre-K program	Review of recommended rules, technical assistance, conduct studies; assist department of education in monitoring programs
Georgia	Commission for Children and Youth	Office of Governor (1987);	Planning and coordination at state level for day care and schools
Kentucky	Office of Early Childhood Education and Development	Legislation (1986)	Coordinate programs
	Interagency Council on Early Childhood Education and Development	Office of Governor (1986)	Planning, expanding parent and child education, and administering grants program
	Interagency Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Education and Development		Support to Interagency Council
Louisiana	Social and health service agencies	–	Coordination of day care and health services for children
Maryland	Interagency Council	Office of Governor (1985)	Coordination of 3 departments responsible for licensing–Health, Education, and Human Resources
	Governor's Council on Early Childhood Development	Legislation (1987)	Review, promote, and encourage early childhood education; coordinate child care and public preschool programs.
Mississippi	Office for Children and Youth	Office of Governor (1988)	Coordination of programs for children and youth
North Carolina	State Department of Public Instruction	Legislation	Leadership and staff development
Oklahoma	Commission on Children and Youth	Legislation	Plan and coordinate services to children and youth.
South Carolina	Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Development and Education	Office of Governor (1980)	Guides policy and coordinates programs and resources across agencies.
	Interagency Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development and Education	Office of Governor (1980)	Identification of issues, priorities and policy recommendations for Council consideration.
Tennessee	Governor's Task Force on Day Care	Ad hoc Committee (1986)	Encourage development of more and better day care opportunities for children.
Texas	Texas Education Agency Texas Department of Human Services	Legislation (1987)	Development of a model for coordination of Pre-kindergarten, Head Start, and Title XX day care services.
Virginia	Council on Child Care and Early Childhood Development	Office of Governor (1989)	Provide an integrated multi-agency approach to delivery of quality child day care and early childhood development services; plan, coordinate, and evaluate all child day care and early childhood development programs within the Commonwealth.
West Virginia	Governor's Commission on Children and Youth	Office of Governor (1979)	General issues about children
	Task Force on Families, Children and Youth	Ad hoc committee– Office of Governor (1989)	General issues about families, children and youth

SOURCES: State departments of education, April 1989.
Marx, F. and Seligson, M., *Public School Early Childhood Study—State Survey*, Bank Street College of Education, 1988.